The currency became worse confounded. To the copper cash, the many kinds of taels, and the foreign-coined dollars of the monetary system in existence before 1894 were added Chinese-minted dollars of several varieties, a subsidiary coinage of silver and copper (much debased), and floods of paper issued by banks, governments, and generals. Plans for improvement were elaborated, but while the Nanking Government showed marked self-constraint in the issue of paper currency, on the whole attempts at reform proved illusory. The situation was complicated by the use of silver as a medium in large transactions in a world where the normal standard was gold. Foreign exchange fluctuated widely and foreign and domestic commerce suffered. However, Chinese founded many banks on Western models and competed with the foreign banks which played so large a part in the finances of the country.

Prices were mounting. This was due partly to the general rise, before 1929, the world over, and partly to the fact that, having entered into the economic life of the world, China could not preserve permanently a scale decidedly lower than that of other nations. The prolonged civil strife operated in the same direction. Wages also rose, and as a rule probably about kept pace with the heightening cost of living—although accurate figures for the nation as a whole are lacking. In the larger centers, and especially in the newer industries, the tendency appears to have been to shorten the hours of labor rather than to increase the standard of living. Late in the 1930's and in the 1940's the Japanese invasion was followed by skyrocketing inflation and in both "free" and "occupied" China prices rose to fantastic heights. This ap-

plied both to commodities and to labor.

Severe famines occurred in portions of the country, especially the North. Famines were no novel phenomenon. Drought or flood and a lack of adequate means of conveyance to transport food to the afflicted sections were nothing new. Civil strife, however, aggravated the dearth, for fighting used up surpluses of grain and the breakdown of government weakened some of the usual agencies for administrating relief. It must be noted, however, that by 1937 Chinese organizations, both state and private, showed an increased willingness and ability to cope with such domestic distress.